

WASHINGTON – For the first time a majority of members of the House and Senate support a 21st Century GI Bill that would provide military veterans with educational benefits ranging from college tuition to living stipends.

As of today, 218 members of the House – and 56 in the Senate – are co-sponsors of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. There are 62 House Republican co-sponsors and 11 Senate Republican co-sponsors.

The chief sponsor in the House, U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell, said the continuing momentum reflects a growing consensus among Democrats and Republicans that the GI Bill should be included in the emergency war supplemental package that will be considered over the next few weeks.

“There’s a groundswell of support to do the right thing for our veterans, and our economy,” said Mitchell. “We’re gaining support every day. And I sincerely hope that leadership will recognize the strong, bipartisan support we have to include this in the supplemental.”

Last week, Mitchell was joined by U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-Fla.), and Peter King (R-N.Y.), to introduce H.R. 5740, the House companion to S. 22.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act extends educational benefits to all members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard.

Under the legislation,

- Service members returning from Iraq or Afghanistan up to 36 months of education benefits, including stipends for housing and books.
- Veterans would have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits.
- Veterans would have the ability to use their benefits for program fees, tuition, books and housing.
- Veterans would be able to use the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program, in which the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.